

Request for Proposal

An Innovative UDL Professional Development System: Universal Design for Learning Principles to Improve Literacy Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

CAST, a non-profit educational research and development organization based in Wakefield, MA is inviting applications from school districts to participate in a one-year project focused on the implementation of the *Universal Design for Learning Professional Development System* (UDL PDS). The UDL PDS is designed to support districts in building capacity in UDL as it applies to reading and writing across content areas. Although the UDL PDS can be implemented across the entire district and content areas, the initial focus of this project is middle school literacy practices. With a specific focus on applying UDL as the guiding curricular and instructional framework, the UDL PDS draws on research about best practices in adolescent literacy instruction to foster success for *all* learners. ***This may be of interest to your district if you are familiar with UDL and have a need to enhance current literacy practices. This document constitutes the application process for selection to work with CAST and partners in the implementation of the UDL PDS.***

What is the Universal Design for Learning Professional Development System?

The UDL PDS provides guidance for implementing UDL in relation to instructional practices. For this particular project, the focus is on the intersection of the UDL framework and research-based middle school literacy practices.

Components of the UDL PDS currently include:

- Professional development (e.g., face-to-face, online)
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) led by UDL Coaches and UDL Facilitators
- Online instruction
- Professional learning resources.

A History of the Project

With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, three school districts (Philadelphia, PA; Reading, MA; and Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation, Columbus, IN) participated in the planning and design phase of this work (2010-2011). Each district offered insights into the realities, needs, goals, and challenges faced in districts of a variety of sizes, demographic characteristics, experience with UDL, and literacy approaches which helped to shape CAST's current UDL PDS. The proposed innovative UDL PDS expands the work of the Planning Grant through the deployment and refinement of an innovative UDL PDS that supports teachers' use of the UDL Framework to incorporate research-based literacy instructional practices across content areas in middle schools, create a professional network of UDL educators, collaborate in planning curriculum and instruction, and incorporate professional coaching specifically related to UDL frameworks.

Project Goals

1. To focus on improved student achievement in one or two identified areas of literacy.
2. To align UDL and research-based literacy instructional practices across content areas through the utilization of the UDL PDS.
3. To show initial indicators of positive change in educator beliefs, knowledge, and skills related to UDL and literacy instructional approaches.

CAST is currently accepting applications from school districts to participate in this project. If you are interested in joining this ground breaking work, please complete an application and return it to CAST by **Wednesday, February 15** by 5 p.m. Decisions will be made on or before **February 27, 2012**.

If you have questions about the application process please feel free to contact:

Patti Ralabate
Project Director
pralabate@cast.org, 781-245-2212 x285

Peggy Coyne
Project Manager
pcoyne@cast.org, 781-245-2212 x245

Universal Design for Learning Professional Development System Project

Eligibility Criteria

- Public school districts within the United States may apply.
- School districts must verify that they have the technology infrastructure to support project work (e.g., student and educator access to adequate technology in classroom settings).
- Key district personnel must have a basic familiarity with Universal Design for Learning.
- School districts must have an identified need for improving middle school literacy.

Benefits to Partner Districts

Partner districts will gain supports and scaffolds that assist in the implementation of UDL in alignment with research-based literacy instructional practices across content areas in middle school including:

- Deep, engaged work with CAST staff and partner districts to develop a model of professional learning and implementation that meets the needs of your district
- The opportunity to be a model district in a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded project that will be replicated at scale
- An effective and sustainable implementation process to support the integration of research-based literacy practices using the UDL framework
- Access to the full spectrum of professional development and instructional resources included in the UDL Professional Development System (i.e. face-to-face, print, and digital)
- Professional development, consultation, and support from CAST staff
- Benefits of collaboration with other districts implementing UDL (e.g., shared resources)
- Continued growth in educator practices relating to literacy
- Enhanced student outcomes
- District stipend of \$8,000 to be used for substitutes, stipends, technology resources, etc.

District Expectations

During the one-year grant period, districts will work with CAST to ***develop and implement*** an effective and sustainable district plan to support the integration of research-based literacy practices using the UDL framework. This first year will focus on middle school literacy.

Districts will:

1. Develop and carry out a specific, comprehensive plan for UDL implementation.
 - The plan will:
 - Be agreed upon by stakeholders including top level school leadership, school principals, teachers, and potential UDL coaches/mentors
 - Be systematically implemented
 - Actively account for ALL learners
 - Align with other current and future district initiatives
 - Account for ample technology infrastructure and resource allocation to support implementation

- Implementation activities will include:
 - Defining a vision and anticipated student and educator outcomes linked to one or two areas of literacy instruction (e.g., comprehension of narrative texts, academic vocabulary)
 - Identifying and supporting a UDL Implementation Team to integrate and coordinate plan activities.
 - Identifying and selecting school-based UDL coaches/mentors
 - Utilizing data collection and monitoring procedures for decision-making
 - Support from additional resource streams (e.g., local district funding, private foundation funding, state and/or federal resources)
 - Developing contingency plans to ensure that UDL remains incorporated in the school district regardless of changes (e.g., changes in district leadership, funding, and/or school-based personnel)
 - Developing a thriving Professional Learning Community (PLC) which includes:
 - Participation by PLC members in face-to-face and online professional development
 - Active engagement in an online community that provides supports and resources
 - Creation of online resources by administrators and teachers in available templates designed by CAST

Application

Directions:

Section 1: Provide required identifying information.

Section 2: The signature page (original signatures required) represents cross-stakeholder participation from district, school leadership, and teachers and is a clear commitment to the success of this project. Signatures indicate that participants are willing to assume responsibilities such as those outlined below:

1. Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent to provide resources needed to ensure project success, such as allotting time for PD and ample technology in classrooms
2. Director of Curriculum (if appropriate, to work with PLCs and guide curriculum enhancement in alignment with UDL)
3. Principal(s) (1-3 middle schools, to provide resources needed to ensure success [to allot time for PD, ample technology in classrooms])
4. Technology coordinator (to provide support for technology infrastructure, ensure teachers and students have access to ample technology in classrooms)
5. Professional development coordinator (if applicable)
6. UDL Mentors/Coaches (may serve as UDL mentors and/or UDL coaches for PLCs, 1-3 depending upon the number of middle schools that will participate)
7. Teachers (representative sample of middle school teachers who are interested in learning more about UDL and how to apply it into their literacy instructional practices)

Section 3: Introduction

Section 4: Response to Selection Criteria

Submission:

Applications are due by 5 PM on February 15, 2012

Please submit digitally to Patti Ralabate at pralabate@cast.org

Completed applications should not be longer than 5 pages (not including the cover and signature page).

Please use Times, 12 point, double space.

Signature pages (original signatures required) may be submitted in one of four ways:

1. Signed and faxed to Leslie O'Callaghan: 781-245-5212
2. Signed with electronic signatures and sent electronically with application
3. Scanned and sent electronically with application
4. Sent separately by mail to:

Leslie O'Callaghan
CAST
40 Harvard Square Mills, Suite 3
Wakefield, MA 01880

Cover and Signature Page

Section 1

School District Name: _____

Please **bold** all that apply:

Urban

Suburban

Rural

Percentage of students in district who receive free and reduced lunch: _____

Percentage of students receiving special education services: _____

Percentage of English Language Learners: _____

Name and contact information of individual who can respond to questions that CAST may have about the application.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Section 2

Signatures and roles: **If you cannot digitally sign, please note whether you are mailing or faxing your signature page.**

Signature	Role
If you have additional signatures, please click tab key to add rows.	

Section 3

Introduction: Describe why your district wants to participate in this project. Highlight goals and rationale for aligning district literacy practices across content areas for all learners with the UDL framework.

Section 4

Selection Criteria: Criteria for participation in this project have been established based on CAST's previous implementation-focused work and models from similar initiatives. Each selected site will:

- Develop and implement a plan that focuses on improving middle school literacy pedagogy across content areas for all learners using the UDL framework
- Show evidence that all learners will be represented (not a special subset or sub-population of students)
- Show evidence of ability to adjust policies, processes, and practices to expand implementation of UDL in the district
- Show evidence of robust structures that support professional learning (e.g. time for PD, time for team planning, UDL Implementation Team to coordinate activities)
- Show evidence of technology infrastructure to support project work (e.g. student and educator access to adequate technology infrastructure and support)

Please be sure to address the following questions in your proposal.

1. Describe any steps taken by your district to adopt policy, processes, or practices related to a UDL implementation plan. If your district has not taken steps to date, what steps would you take as part of this implementation project?
2. Describe provisions that will support Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) related to your literacy practices and the UDL framework.
3. Describe how your technology infrastructure will support successful use of digital and web-based resources related to your literacy practices at the district and classroom level. (e.g. Do security protocols impede access to many websites? Is your Internet speed adequate for classroom use by multiple users such as teachers and students?)
4. This project will require you to identify a cross-stakeholder team who will work with CAST staff during the implementation. Please describe the process you will use to identify this team. Members should consist of district- and school-based administrators, as well as classroom teachers.
5. Describe previous district and/or school level participation in UDL awareness presentation or other UDL professional learning opportunities, such as attending keynote speech presented by CAST staff, awareness raising workshops, on-line UDL modules (www.cast.org/pd/OnlineModules/index.html).

Please respond to the following questions; indicate your answer in bold:

1. The district will identify a key representative who agrees to serve as lead for the project. YES NO
2. In collaboration with CAST district personnel will investigate procedures for scaling the project to other selected schools within the district YES NO
3. School districts must commit to supporting dissemination efforts beyond the district level through various media including video, web presence, and outreach through the press (e.g., signed releases from educators and willingness to distribute to parents). YES NO

Selection Scoring Rubric:

Scoring Criteria	Promising	Adequate	Limited	Unsatisfactory
a. Introduction (up to 20 points)	Goals and rationale are clearly articulated for aligning middle school literacy practices with the UDL framework.	Goals or rationale are clearly articulated for aligning middle school literacy practices with the UDL framework.	Goals and rationale are not clearly articulated.	Goals and rationale are not included.
b. Proposed plan (up to 25 points)	Proposed plan includes a clear description of current and/or future policies, processes, or practices that support implementation of UDL and literacy instruction.	Proposed plan includes a description of current and/or future policies, processes, or practices that support only implementation of UDL or literacy instruction.	Proposed plan includes description of current and/or future policies, processes, or practices that do not support implementation of UDL and literacy instruction.	Proposed plan does not include a clear description of current and/or future policies, processes, or practices that support implementation of UDL and literacy instruction.
c. PLC & PD support (up to 20 points)	PLCs or similar teams already exist and are supported by sufficient time for regular meetings and professional development, and time will clearly be allocated to focus on aligning UDL and literacy.	PLCs or similar teams may not already exist but the proposed plan indicates support for sufficient time for regular meetings and professional development, and time will be allocated to focus on UDL or literacy.	PLCs or similar teams may or may not already exist but the proposed plan does not indicate support for sufficient time for regular meetings and professional development, or time to focus on UDL and literacy.	Proposal does not indicate evidence of PLCs.
d. Infrastructure support (up to 15 points)	Technology infrastructure includes ample broadband support, available computers for simultaneous use by multiple users, and security protocols that allow for access to key digital and web-based resources and media.	Although some changes may be needed, technology infrastructure includes adequate broadband support, reasonable access to computers for simultaneous use to key digital and web-based resources and media.	Technology infrastructure is limited by excessive security protocols, inadequate internet speed, and/or limited computer access by students and educators.	Technology infrastructure will not support simultaneous access by multiple users to key digital and web-based resources and media.
e. Cross-stakeholder Team (up to 15 points)	A cross-stakeholder team is identified and they are already familiar with UDL.	A reasonable process for identifying the cross-stakeholder team is identified.	The team does not or will not include cross-stakeholder representation.	No process for identifying the cross-stakeholder team is described.
f. Responses to question 6,7, and 8. (up to 5 points)	The district agrees.			No indication of agreement.